

BUSINESS; NAVIGATING THE GIG ECONOMY; How to earn extra cash by teaching English online

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FULL TEXT

If you're a native speaker, you can teach English online to people in other parts of the world.

In many cases, all you need to secure these jobs is a good internet connection and the language skills you grew up with. And because there are so many sites seeking English teachers for students in every corner of the world, your hours can be as flexible as you want them to be.

If you aim to make this a regular gig, you'd be wise to obtain an English as a second (or foreign) language certificate. These certificate programs, which typically require 120 hours of instruction, qualify you for the best-paying positions.

You can get a job without it, of course. But unless you have a bachelor's degree or another form of teaching credential, you're likely to earn half as much as those who can work with the platforms that require credentials. Pay for online English teachers ranges from \$5 to \$26 per hour.

Where can you find a job? There are myriad online platforms. We've started with those that require the fewest credentials.

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Credentials optional

Cambly is an online tutoring platform that teaches children and adults to speak English through one-on-one conversations with tutors.

All you need to get a job here is be a native English speaker and have a stable internet connection. You are paid 17 to 20 cents per minute – and only for minutes when you're engaged in conversation. That makes the low (\$10-\$12) hourly wage even lower when you account for downtime between chats.

NiceTalk operates almost the same way, paying tutors by the minute at a rate that works out to \$10 an hour – if you're engaged in a video chat for the entire hour. Like with Cambly, tutors need only be native English speakers and own the necessary technology to be hired.

Italki is a language tutoring site that provides jobs for both professional teachers and "community tutors," who qualify with nothing more than proficiency in a language. The site teaches all major languages and posts weekly updates of the languages that require tutors. Tutors set their own pay rates and determine their schedules. The platform takes a 15% commission for providing marketing and payment processing.

Open English focuses on teaching English to students in Latin America. Unlike some of the other platforms, Open English has its part-time teachers assist a classroom full of students. Teachers say the students can be at a range of levels, which can make instruction difficult. In addition, the site uses five communication platforms, which leads to glitches.

For another platform, Preply, the main requirement for tutors is that they are over the age of 18. Other than that, you need to verify your ID and provide any credentials you have. Theoretically, you set your own rate on this platform. But Preply's commission schedule is horrendous. The site takes a commission amounting to 100% of the first lesson with each new student and 33% of the teacher's pay for subsequent lessons with the same student.

Because the site expects teachers to provide a significant amount of work for free, this is one of the few tutoring sites that SideHusl.com does not recommend.

Credentials required

The better-paying English tutoring jobs require additional credentials, such as teaching experience, a bachelor's degree or a certificate in teaching English as a second or foreign language. These sites typically promise pay ranging from \$14 to \$26 per hour.

If you live in California or a few other states that have restrictive freelancer laws, you may have trouble getting work with some of these companies. Some of the bigger sites, such as VIPKid, stopped taking applications from California freelancers shortly after the state passed Assembly Bill 5, which reclassified many kinds of workers – including online teachers – as employees rather than freelancers.

VIPKid enlists freelancers to teach English to Chinese children, paying \$7 to \$9 per half-hour (depending on your credentials). Pay can be increased through a series of bonuses, allowing teachers to earn as much as \$22 per hour.

The downside: Classes are scheduled for after dinnertime in Beijing, which puts them in the middle of the night for many people in the U.S. If you live in Los Angeles, the peak weekday hours are between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.

Qkids also enlists freelancers to teach English language skills to Chinese children. Each lesson lasts 30 minutes and pays between \$8 and \$10. The \$10 rate includes bonuses for performance and attendance. Experienced teachers are preferred, but anyone with a good personality and strong English skills can apply. Lessons are prepared for you.

Magic Ears works much the same way but requires additional credentials. You must have teaching experience and complete training to teach English as a second or foreign language. The site also pays a bit more: \$9 to \$11 per half-hour in base pay and \$1 hourly bonuses for showing up a few minutes early and for teaching at peak times.

Teach Away serves as a matchmaker between prospective teachers and the schools and online platforms that want to hire them. Most jobs require a college degree; some also require teaching experience or the ability to communicate effectively in another language.

Kristof is the editor of SideHusl.com, an independent site that reviews hundreds of money-making opportunities in the gig economy.

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